EXODUS

Chapter 2

*The Birth of Moses*

**Now a man of the house of Levi married a Levite woman, 2 and she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. 3 But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. 4 His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. 5 Then Pharaoh’s daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the river bank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her slave girl to get it. 6 She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. “This is one of the Hebrew babies,” she said. 7 Then his sister asked Pharaoh’s daughter, “Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?” 8 “Yes, go,” she answered. And the girl went and got the baby’s mother. 9 Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you.” So the woman took the baby and nursed him. 10 When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh’s daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses, saying, “I drew him out of the water.”**

**2:1–2** What follows Pharaoh’s order to kill is a report not of death but of marriage and conception. (TLSB)

**2:1** *a man … a Levite woman.* Perhaps Amram and Jochebed (but see note on 6:20).

(CSB)

The Levites became the priestly tribe of Israel. (TLSB)

**2:2** *a fine child.* Moses was “no ordinary child” (Ac 7:20; Heb 11:23), “fair in the sight of God” (see NIV text note on Ac 7:20). The account of Moses’ remarkable deliverance in infancy foreshadows the deliverance from Egypt that God would later effect through him. (CSB)

Hbr *tob*. Same word is used in Gn 1 to describe God’s “good” creation. (TLSB)

**2:3** *papyrus basket.* Each of the two Hebrew words lying behind this phrase is of Egyptian origin. The word for “basket” is used only here and of Noah’s ark (see note on Ge 6:14). Moses’ basket was a miniature version of the large, seaworthy “papyrus boats” mentioned in Isa 18:2. (CSB)

Same Hbr word is used for Noah’s ark. Many ancient cultures practiced infant exposure, or leaving unwanted children without care (e.g., the Mesopotamian “Legend of Sargon”). Pharaoh’s ruling forced a version of this despicable practice on the Israelites. (TLSB)

*bulrushes*. Papyrus, a tall stalk or reed used to construct small boats. (TLSB)

*bitumen and pitch*. These tars made the basket watertight. This detail shows the mother’s intense care. (TLSB)

*reeds.* A word of Egyptian derivation, reflected in the proper name “Red Sea” (see NIV text note on 10:19). (CSB)

Tall grass along the Nile hid the basket. (TLSB)

**2:4** *his sister.* Miriam (see 15:20). (CSB)

**2:5** *Pharaoh’s daughter.* Perhaps the famous 18th-dynasty princess who later became Queen Hatshepsut. (CSB)

*bathe at the river*. The princess may have bathed in the Nile believing the water imparted fruitfulness and long life. (TLSB)

*attendants.* They stayed on the river bank to bathe the princess.

**2:6** Hbr indicates that Pharaoh’s daughter knew she was breaking her father’s law when she became Moses’ protector. No explanation, apart from care, is given for her actions. (TLSB)

**2:7** *nurse*. A wet nurse, who suckles another’s child. (TLSB)

**2:9** *I will give you your wages*. Moses’ mother (v 2) is paid from Pharaoh’s treasury to nurse her own son! This was not the only time Pharaoh was plundered to benefit God’s people (cf 12:36). (TLSB)

**2:10** See Ac 7:21–22. (CSB)

*he became her son.* Throughout this early part of Exodus, all the pharaoh’s efforts to suppress Israel were thwarted by women: the midwives (1:17), the Israelite mothers (1:19), Moses’ mother and sister (vv. 3–4, 7–9), the pharaoh’s daughter (here). The pharaoh’s impotence to destroy the people of God is thus ironically exposed. (CSB)

Indicating adoption. (TLSB)

*Moses.* The name, of Egyptian origin, means “is born” and forms the second element in such pharaonic names as Ahmose (see note on 1:8), Thutmose and Rameses (see note on 1:11). (CSB)

Authentic Egyptian name found in historical records (“Mose”). (TLSB)

*drew him out.* A Hebrew wordplay on the name Moses (see NIV text note), emphasizing his providential rescue from the Nile. Thus Moses’ name may also have served as a reminder of the great act of deliverance God worked through him at the “Red Sea” (see 13:17–14:31). (CSB)

Hbr *mosheh* (Moses) and *mashah* (“draw out”) sound alike. The name worked in Hbr and Egyptian. (TLSB)

**2:1–10** Moses, born of believing Hebrew parents (Heb 11:23), is raised in Pharaoh’s household and “instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Ac 7:22), enjoying the best of two worlds. Although God is not mentioned, He is accomplishing His purposes to redeem Israel. Even when God does not seem to be at work in our lives, we can be certain that His good and gracious will is being done among us. • Lord, help us to provide well for our children and their instruction, especially in the Christian faith, and to celebrate Your redemption for us. Amen. (TLSB)

*Moses Flees to Midian*

**11 One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. 12 Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, “Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?” 14 The man said, “Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” Then Moses was afraid and thought, “What I did must have become known.” 15 When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. 16 Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father’s flock. 17 Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock. 18 When the girls returned to Reuel their father, he asked them, “Why have you returned so early today?” 19 They answered, “An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds. He even drew water for us and watered the flock.” 20 “And where is he?” he asked his daughters. “Why did you leave him? Invite him to have something to eat.” 21 Moses agreed to stay with the man, who gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses in marriage. 22 Zipporah gave birth to a son, and Moses named him Gershom, saying, “I have become an alien in a foreign land.” 23 During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. 24 God heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob. 25 So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.**

**2:11–15** See Ac 7:23–29; Heb 11:24–27. (CSB)

**2:11** *Moses had grown up.* He was now 40 years old (see Ac 7:23). (CSB)

*his people*. As an adult, Moses identified with his people when he saw their burdens and one of them brutally beaten. Moses may have grown up knowing his Hebrew heritage since he was nursed by his own mother. He may also have been circumcised. (TLSB)

**2:12** Moses tried to hide his deed because he had no authority for his action. (TLSB)

**2:13** Moses again became angry with someone “in the wrong” and demanded an explanation. (TLSB)

**2:14** *Who made you ruler and judge … ?* Unwittingly, the speaker made a prediction that would be fulfilled 40 years later (see Ac 7:27, 30, 35). The Hebrew word for “judge” could also refer to a deliverer, as in the book of Judges (see Ac 7:35); it was often a synonym for “ruler” in the OT (see Ge 18:25 and note) as well as in ancient Canaanite usage. *Moses was afraid.* See note on Heb 11:27. (CSB)

**2:15** *Pharaoh.* Probably Thutmose III (see Introduction: Chronology). (CSB)

Pharaoh would not tolerate someone living in his palace and acting against his authority. (TLSB)

*Midian.* Named after one of Abraham’s younger sons (see Ge 25:2; see also note on Ge 37:25). Midian was located in southeastern Sinai and west central Arabia, flanking the eastern arm of the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba) on either side. Dry and desolate, it formed a stark contrast to Moses’ former home in the royal court. He lived in Midian 40 years (see Ac 7:29–30). (CSB)

The Midianites (cf Gn 25:4; 37:36) were nomadic tribes. Moses fled into the Sinai Peninsula, east of Egypt. (TLSB)

**2:16** *priest of Midian.* Reuel (see v. 18), which means “friend of God.” His other name, Jethro (see 3:1), may be a title meaning “his excellency.” (CSB)

Just as Melchizedek, the king-priest of Salem (Gn 14:18; Heb 7:1), was a mysterious figure, so was this priest of Midian (cf Ex 18). The gods he worshiped are never described. (TLSB)

*water their father’s flock*. They had done the hard work of filling the water troughs, and then they were attacked (v 17). (TLSB)

**2:17** *saved them*. A third time, Moses stood up for people being wronged, acting as the rescuer of the weak and mistreated (cf vv 12–14). (TLSB)

*watered their flock*. Moses showed further mercy. (TLSB)

**2:18** *Reuel*. The priest of Midian likely had more than one name; his more common name was Jethro. (TLSB)

**2:20** Their father showed irritation at their failure to show hospitality to a stranger. (TLSB)

**2:21** *gave … his daughter*. In marriage (Hbr expression). Cf Gn 29:28. (TLSB)

**2:22** *Gershom*. Combining the Hbr words for “stranger” and “there.” (TLSB)

*have been a sojourner.* A Hebrew man, raised as an Egyptian, married a Midianite priest’s daughter. Moses was a foreigner everywhere. (TLSB)

**2:11–22** God humbles Moses before calling him to lead Israel out of Egypt, letting him feel the sufferings of his people and making Moses realize how totally inadequate he is to save them. This former prince must live as a fugitive in the household of a Midianite priest. Luther: “God is the God of the humble, the miserable, the afflicted, the oppressed, the desperate, and of those who have been brought down to nothing at all” (AE 26:314). God humbles us as He humbled Moses. He does this so that at the proper time He may raise us up in Christ (1Pt 5:6). • Lord, teach me to trust Your guidance even when days are dark. Amen. (TLSB)

**2:23** *During that long period.* Thutmose III (see note on v. 15) enjoyed a long reign. (CSB)

*many days*. During Moses’ absence from Egypt, the king died. (TLSB)

*groaned* … *and cried out for help*. The change in rulers did nothing to change Israel’s slavery. (TLSB)

**2:24–25** *God heard … remembered* … *saw … knew*. Four verbs catalog God’s response to Israel’s cry for rescue. God’s knowing always brings about an effect. God understood what Israel felt. After seeming to be out of touch and unconcerned, He was about to act. (TLSB)

**2:24** *covenant with Abraham.* See Ge 15:17–18; 17:7 and notes. (CSB)

*with Isaac.* See Ge 17:19; 26:24. (CSB)

*with Jacob.* See Ge 35:11–12. (CSB)

**2:23–25** God hears Israel’s cry for deliverance. Sinful humans forget the promises they make, but God never forgets. He does not forget Israel but remembers His covenant with their fathers. In Holy Communion, we remember God’s new covenant in Christ. Holy Communion is God’s promise of forgiveness to us and assures us that He will never forget us. • Rescue us, dearest Jesus, from the slavery of sin, and deliver us to the Promised Land. Amen. (TLSB)